“Christmas Truce”

“Christmas Truce” is a poem written by the UK Poet Laureat Carol Ann Duffy in remembrance of the soldiers in the German and British trenches in the first World War.

Considering the title, the intelligent reader understands it is a commemorative poem of the truce declared by English and German soldiers in Christmas 1914. So the reader expects the poem to tell, to offer images which better conveys the way peace was created.

Looking at the structure, the intelligent reader understands it is a song made of nineteen stanzas, each of them consists more or less in five lines. So the reader knows that the speaking voice or the speaking voices wants/want the reader focusing on the content of every one beyond the way it is told.

Taking in consideration the content of the poem, it can be divided into three sections: the first goes from the first stanza to the eighth one; the second section goes from the ninth stanza to the seventeenth one and the conclusive section consists of the last two stanzas of the song.

Now I am going to better explain each content of the sections.

In the first part of the song, the speaking voice gives to the intelligent reader many images of what it has been war like to the soldiers who fought into the conflict. In particular the speaking voice focuses his attention an so focuses the reader attention on the cold clime of the December 1914. One can object it is normal that in winter there is cold but the intelligent reader also knows that the low temperature is referred to “the War mood”. Soldiers in 1914 were obliged to fight and murder: this is the reason why the speaking voice conveys the idea of cold by the use of many expression such as: “cold sky”; “silver frost”; “freeze”; “midwinter”; “frozen”. Indeed soldiers who fought there, were in No Man’s land which make darker the idea to be in War, faraway from home. In addition a soldier to try to think, dream to be with his mother looks at the stars prying to see his mother eyes: this was probably a way to do not “realize” the reality where the soldiers were and tackle towards the fear of death. But in the seventh and in the eighth stanzas, the place seems to change: German soldiers started to sing into their lines and an English soldier watched flickering flames from the other side.

So in the second section of the poem, the intelligent reader understands that “something cropped up” there were something unusual: soldiers of every front decided to declare a truce promising to do not shut. The battalions gave one to another gifts; every man shook the hands of a foe as a friend. In addition, once more, to forgot to be in War and remember the family at home, an English soldier gave to a German one a picture of his wife; he thought she was beautiful: on December 1915 soldiers shared even the most precious thing they had. Now the intelligent reader understands why, in the first section, the speaking voice wanted to concentrate his and the reader’s attention on cold: he wanted to create a contrast between cold of the winter and the War and the friendly atmosphere of the truce that characterizes the second section.

Anyway, as the truce came, it went: the final two stanzas reclaim the cold atmosphere of the first section. Truce is: a stopping of hostilities for a certain period of time by agreement of all the warring parties. I would like you to focus the attention on the expression “certain period”: a truce is not a permanent period unfortunatly.